

WORDS & VISION

UFV FACULTY AND STAFF ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Member Engagement & Labour, Management & Governance

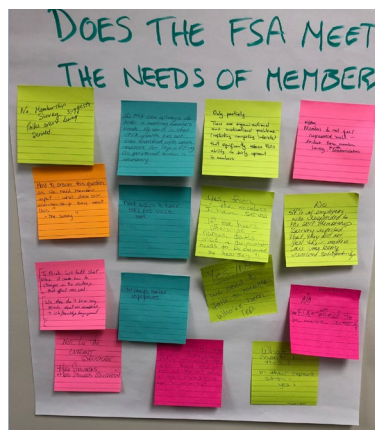
Sean Parkinson | President

Colleagues,

The FSA executive has been discussing a self-study document regarding an operational review of our union's structure. The prospect of rejuvenation, change, and positioning ourselves to better serve and represent our members is hard work.

It is beneficial to go through this type of exercise periodically and the FSA is past-due for one. UFV has experienced significant turnover in Human Resources leadership and Labour Relations staff in the past few years. These changes have created challenges for our union and the members we serve; so the union must examine and review its own structure to ensure we are best able to serve you.

At our last FSA Executive meeting we responded to some big questions taken from the scope questions that motivated this operational review. The photo in this column shows one of the questions: "Does the FSA meet the needs of members." The most common responses included concerns with "representation" and "engagement." There is general agreement that representation is the most important thing we do for members, but it seems to be quite restrictive or narrowly defined in our exercise. The way we represent you goes beyond one-on-one support for labour relations issues and general contract administration. Effective representation requires us to be connected to others in our community, and to others doing the same work.



Here are some of the events and activities I have been involved in this fall:

Sept. 2 As an expression of solidarity for a fellow Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE) local president, I walked from Penticton to Kelowna to help out with his fundraiser for an injured Okanagan College student.

Sept. 4 I joined union members and folks from all over the Lower Mainland in celebrating Labour Day at Holland Park in Surrey. The FPSE booth was well attended, and we enjoyed celebrating the reinstatement of Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language funding with those who came by. This was the beginning of our media outreach, gaining positive coverage around newly tuition-free ABE classes this fall.

Sept. 16 I attended a shred-a-thon event sponsored by Surrey RCMP and SuperSave Shredding in support of the Sources Food bank.

Sept. 26 I attended the Fraser Valley United Way RevUp Kickoff. I've included a few of my speaking notes from the event below because the theme of "making connections, building relationships" is precisely the point I am trying to make regarding representation in this column.

- I am proud of the impact the Faculty and Staff Association makes in our community through their support of the United Way. Last year we were part of the UFV team that won a Community Spirit award.
- United Way's approach to community building is relationship-based. That's something you in this room know a lot about: making connections, building relationships.
- Connections and relationships build community. And when connections are strengthened, our community becomes stronger.

- This theme of connections is something I live and breathe as president of a faculty & staff association.
- Sometimes it really is the right connection that can change a person's life—like a teacher or a professor that opens a door to a new direction or a new way of thinking.
- The theme of connections is also incredibly important in the labour movement.
- The labour movement is built on the philosophy of solidarity, of standing together to make positive change.
- United Way and the labour movement's partnership goes back for more than 30 years.
- A couple of basic principles of that partnership is that union members are first and foremost citizens of their community, and that union members have a responsibility to their community.
- Unions across the province are strong and proud supporters of United Way. We are one of 19 locals of the FPSE, which is also a proud supporter of the United Way.
- Here in the Fraser Valley, United Way's relationship with the Fraser Valley Labour Council is strong and long formerly through United Way Fraser Valley and now through United Way of the Lower Mainland.
- Over the last year, the Fraser Valley Labour council partnered with United Way on the Tampon Tuesday initiative on Women's Day and we were proud to stand together with them at Labour Day this year.
- We have and will continue to make positive change here in the Fraser Valley together.
- Together we can help our most vulnerable – children, families, seniors.

On October 23 and 24 I was in Victoria and the Legislature with fellow FPSE local presidents to lobby the Minister of Advanced Education. For my part in the lobby, I spoke to funding issues in our public post-secondary system.

Issue:

Post-secondary education operating grants have declined by 20 per cent since 2001 after higher education inflation is accounted for. This funding gap has been filled by tuition revenue.

Impacts:

Student debt in BC averages \$35,000 after completing a four-year degree program.

International Education—International student tuition is not regulated. International student tuition is making up an increasing proportion of institution funding—this creates a vulnerability should international student registration be disrupted due to global events. Further, international education recruiters, or agents are not currently regulated and typically receive 20–40 per cent of international student tuition as their commission. We have received reports from across BC that there are insufficient supports for international students and new Canadians, resulting in a strain on support services for all students.

Domestic tuition and fees—this has been regu-

lated since 2004 with a cap of 2 per cent per year allowed, but institutions have found every way imaginable around it. New student fees, for example, are not regulated.

Recommendation:

Establish a working committee of stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive funding review and develop a new funding formula that meets the needs of BC's public post-secondary institutions. Change the policy requiring institutions to tie program offerings to the Skills for Jobs Blueprint.

FPSE hosted a reception on the evening of October 23 with all MLAs invited. The event was well attended and I got to meet several of our elected officials. I was able to speak again with our Minister of advanced education, the Hon. Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, some of her staff, as well as with the Advanced Education critics Stephanie Cadieux and Simon Gibson. I have seen our minister three times since the summer, with FPSE we are making a connection and starting to build a relationship with our minister.

Effective representation requires us to be connected to others in our community. Our community partnerships with the United Way and the Fraser Valley Labour council help link us to our community—we learn about what supports are available in our communities as well as learn of volunteer opportunities where we can participate.

Effective representation requires us to be connected to others that do the same work. Our relationship with FPSE and through them to the Canadian Association of University Teachers and the BC Federation of Labour helps us step out of our own situations, connect our union and our members to issues and opportunities that interest them, and empower us in all of our work.

Engagement was also raised by your executive when asked if we meet the needs of members. We can do a better job with respect to member engagement. I believe our current executive structure constrains efforts to organize members and limits opportunities to strengthen membership engagement when confronting workplace issues. The self-study document proposes changes in the FSA to strengthen engagement. We look forward to presenting our work for your consideration.





Workplace Empowerment Begins with Organizing

Christina Neigel | Faculty Vice President

I have spent several months sifting through a variety of resources to better understand the context of both the FSA and UFV as part of our union's operational review process. While the endeavor has revealed a number of interesting facts about both organizations, it has also exposed a very uneven data landscape. This is highly problematic because the absence of accurate and consistent information makes it very difficult for any of us to make informed and strategic decisions. Despite this, there is some useful information that can assist us to pick away at the reasons why our workplace is increasingly dysfunctional. For example, between 2007/08 and 2015/16 budget years there has been a 129 per cent increase in the number of excluded (non-FSA employees), a 25 per cent increase in domestic full-time equivalent (FTE) students, a 60 per

cent increase in international student headcounts, and an increase of only 12 per cent in FSA FTE memberships.

In conducting the self-study of the FSA, I have been tasked with making sense of the data as a way of understanding our present union context. What this reveals is that the increasing workloads of faculty and staff are not met with an infusion of teaching and student support. Rather, there has been a steady shift in priorities that include spending on administration (at UFV this translates into a current expense of \$10.2 million/year), stockpiling "surpluses" that are internally restricted, and supporting capital projects (Morrill & Morill, 2017). Despite student FTE growth, this has resulted in an erosion of core services, mainly in the form of teaching and support service labour.

The question I now struggle with is what, if anything, are we going to do with this kind of information? Most of us have been floating on the waves of workplace change, allowing the tides to carry us along. Ironically, though, most of us recognize that our work is un-

sustainable and we increasingly rely on contingent labour to assist us in treading water. We become complicit in our own overwork because we often do not protest, preferring to problem solve (or withdraw) rather than call out unreasonable expectations and oppressive conditions. We grow increasingly competitive as we pick at each other for scarce resources, often wound-up by rhetoric about "hard times."

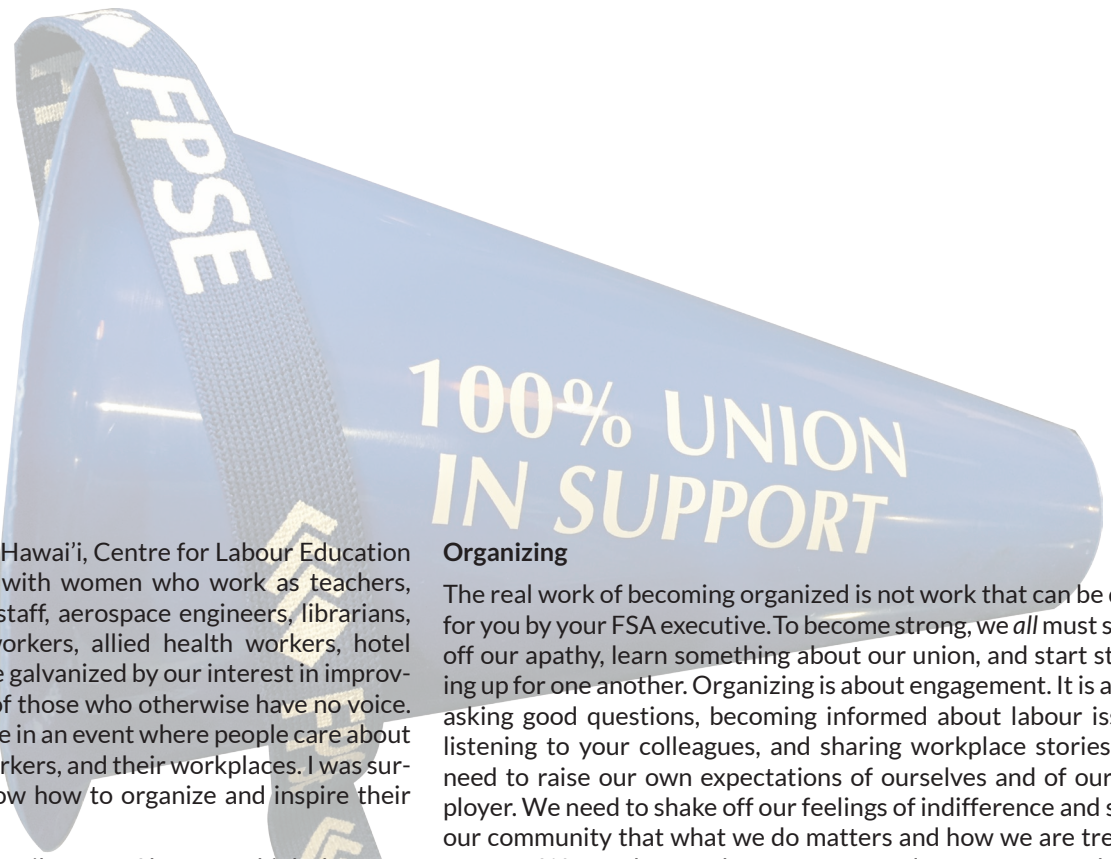
Action

We are role models to our students and we send a powerful message to them when we succumb to workplace practices that are exploitative, divisive and unjust. There is a communal responsibility to stand up and fight for fairness and fight to protect one another. To do this, we must *all* be prepared to take action. Resisting the erosion of healthy working conditions and quality education requires us to be tenacious, informed, and organized. This is only possible if we feel connected to our work, our colleagues, and a passion for the "greater good".

I am uneasy because I am not certain we can rise to the occasion.

This summer I had the privilege of attending the Summer Institute for Union Women where I spent four days with passionate people who resist—no, they fight – to protect one another. In many cases, they rise up to defend their brothers and sisters in industries that they have little in common with. They act out of a desire to help their fellow human beings.





Hosted by the University of Hawai'i, Centre for Labour Education and Research, I connected with women who work as teachers, electricians, office support staff, aerospace engineers, librarians, professors, nurses, ferry workers, allied health workers, hotel workers, and more. We were galvanized by our interest in improving the working conditions of those who otherwise have no voice. I was honoured to participate in an event where people care about their neighbours, their coworkers, and their workplaces. I was surrounded by people who know how to organize and inspire their co-workers.

My own privilege weighed heavily on me. I began to think about my students and the careers they would embark upon and the struggles they would face in their workplaces. I then began to think about the wasted opportunities in our own union where I have seen members undermine and devalue each other. We should be turning our gaze, collectively, to the underlying machinery that attempts to fragment us on a daily basis. We MUST ORGANIZE. We have power if we are willing to engage, support each other, and act in the best interests of our UFV community. To do this, however, requires a bit of courage and a willingness to learn a little about each other and the role of unions.

Courage

Part of the Institute's curriculum involved a day of action where all attendees embarked on a march through the streets of Waikiki to support hotel workers who were in a difficult contract dispute with their employer. We had placards, bullhorns, hats, and chants. I was nervous because I had never acted in this way before. I wore a great big sign that said "ILIKAI UNFAIR - EQUAL WORK - EQUAL PAY" and, using a bullhorn, hollered a variety of chants until I lost my voice.

We stopped in front of one of the "offending" hotels and chanted for an hour. This action had an impact. After weeks of silence, management agreed to meet and discuss the hotel worker contract. I was, quite simply, inspired. Women who were being harmed by an employer that had made the choice to pay their staff less for greater volumes of work were able to draw on the support of a wildly diverse group of women; women who all understood one important fact—unions make a difference.

Being organized makes a difference.

Organizing

The real work of becoming organized is not work that can be done for you by your FSA executive. To become strong, we *all* must shrug off our apathy, learn something about our union, and start standing up for one another. Organizing is about engagement. It is about asking good questions, becoming informed about labour issues, listening to your colleagues, and sharing workplace stories. We need to raise our own expectations of ourselves and of our employer. We need to shake off our feelings of indifference and show our community that what we do matters and how we are treated matters. We need to reach out across our departments, push past difference, learn about one another, and encourage one another to *expect more*—more from your union, your employer, and each other. A good union contract is only one product of an engaged and organized union. The broader view is that a strong union advocates for greater social justice through the elimination of social inequity so that we may all enjoy a more just society.

Twenty-first century unions have complicated agendas. Beyond internal organizing, they must also develop and maintain more elaborate coalitions with other organizations interested in protecting worker rights. This kind of organizing work requires long-term visioning and methodical planning to fight the erosion of legal protections and public indifference.

Socio-economic and political conditions suggest that the problems associated with labour—our labour – are not going away. As such, there will be more "days of action." I just hope that when I, again participate, my brothers and sisters at UFV will be there to support me.

Morrill, C., & Morrill, J. (2017, February 9). Pulling back the curtain of university budget reports. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba. Retrieved from <https://policyfix.ca/2017/01/19/pulling-back-the-curtain-on-university-budget-reports/>



30 Drops Out of the Bucket Spill Over into the UFV Community

Lisa Morry | Communications
Chair

On April 10, 2017, the FSA announced the results of our 30 Drops Out of the Bucket Contest, revealing shocking student debt. We found that it only takes 10 UFV students to rack up a million dollars in student debt! I don't use many exclamation marks, but that statement deserves the punctuation.

Here's how the contest worked: all current or former UFV students were eligible to enter, as long as they had completed at least one course at UFV since Sept. 1, 2005 and had student debt. The 30 students with the highest level of debt received \$1,000 each. We only had two weeks to advertise and run the contest and we had to quickly finish up before the provincial election third-party advertising rule kicked in, so that made the effort breathtakingly tight. We put up posters, we advertised on our website and on social media, we walked around and talked to UFV instructors. I advised students and former students I knew to enter no matter what their debt. If only 30 people entered, I told them, you'd be one of the winners. But word got around. We received 223 valid entries. And the statistics were heartbreaking.

- Total student debt from 30 winners: \$2.516 million
- Average debt among 30 winners: \$83,860
- Total debt from 223 valid contest entries: \$7,071,804
- Average debt from 223 entrants: \$31,712
- Highest debt: \$169,545
- Top 10 debt holders total: \$1,071,617 (yes, averaging \$107,000!)

The Friday before the Monday on which we were to announce the winners, I went home with a heavy heart. I had seen so many stories of effort and heavy debt burden and I knew we could only help 30 of them. And we could only help those 30 with a cheque that would cover basically a one-month payment of the average debt of the 30 winners.

According to the calculator at Student Aid BC, <https://studentaid-bc.ca/plan/debt#repayment>, using the average debt of our contest winners, \$83,860, the maximum 10-year term and the fixed interest rate option, the monthly payment works out to \$1,004 per month. A \$1,000 cheque really is just a "drop out of the bucket" for our winners—it only covers one month's repayment.

We ran this contest not only to help 30 UFV students take a "drop out of the bucket" of student debt but also to highlight the impact of high and rising tuition fees and the resulting debt levels our students incur. Our 30 Drops Out of the Bucket contest was modeled on a contest Okanagan College ran, and funded by and part of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators' Open the Doors campaign to raise awareness of inadequate government funding for post-secondary education. Please visit www.openthedoors.ca to find out more.

I would like to take this further and have the data we collected analyzed for further insights.



Margaret Nickelchok | JPDC
Co-Chair

Navigating the Professional Development Process

First, I would like to thank you for your confidence and support on my role as the co-chair of the Joint Professional Development Committee (JPDC). You can count on me to work hard to ensure you have equitable access to funds and that there is a fair and manageable process in place to allow you to pursue the development of your professional interests and skills.

FPSE Professional & Scholarly Activity Committee Update:

I attended an informative meeting of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE) Professional & Scholarly Activity committee. This committee has representatives from post-secondary institutions from across the province and provides us with the opportunity to share and learn how each institution is managing professional development and scholarly activity. Sharing of information is a great opportunity to identify what works well, potential issues, and how we can improve. I left the meeting with new insight, perspective and a critical eye relative to how UFV manages PD which I will be discussing with my FSA Executive colleagues.

PD Application Process:

The JPDC has been busy updating the website, forms, and procedures over the past year.

It is important remind everyone that it is your supervisor who now approves all PD applications and forwards all approved applications to the PD assistant on your behalf. Please note that denied applications (with the justification on how the criteria was not met) are returned to you to forward to the PD assistant. The denied applications will be reviewed by the JPDC to ensure that the criteria has been fairly applied.

For more information on professional development and the procedures, visit the www.ufv.ca/hr/professional-development/.



Questions We Need to Ask Ourselves about Sexual Harassment

Anastasia Anderson | FPSE
Status of Women Rep

The subject of sexual harassment has been prominent in the news and on social media in recent weeks. The accusations of harassment against prominent figures in business, the entertainment industry, and politics have led people across North America to consider why women have so often been silent in the face of harassment and what is tacitly accepted as simply part of navigating the world as a woman. The public conversation on the issue and my new position as Status of Women Representative to the FSA have led me to wonder about sexual harassment at UFV. (This kind of harassment is not exclusively directed towards women, but mostly young women are the targets.) I have always assumed that sexual harassment is uncommon at UFV. I do know from personal conversations over the years that some incidents have occurred. But, is there a way to find out how many? Is there a way to track trends (if there are any trends to track)? And furthermore, does the FSA have a record of the numbers of sexual harassment complaints that have been made by employees and against employees over the years?

Wanting to know the answers to these questions is not just a matter of idle interest. Sexual harassment is a serious workplace issue. Having a strong and well-informed union to support members in these cases can make the difference between a complaint being filed and an employee feeling too powerless to say anything. The union can work to protect members from frivolous complaints. And, the union can play an important role in helping to educate members so that no members think sexual harassment is acceptable behavior.

I started by trying to answer the last question first. Does the FSA track the numbers of known complaints? The answer is no. I found that the FSA is currently unable to simply look up how many complaints have been made by and against members. The information is in the FSA files; however, finding the exact numbers would require going through years worth of individual files to determine whether the member's case involved sexual harassment. I believe that the new record keeping system that has recently been introduced in the FSA office, will make tracking possible in the future.

My quick visit to the FSA office made me realize that finding numbers might take a bit more digging; so, I turned to the UFV harassment policy in order to get a sense of the role of the union when an incident involves a member. The UFV *Discrimination, Bullying, and Harassment Prevention Policy 18* covers all members of the UFV community engaged in university related activities (including students, contractors, service providers, and members of the Board). The UFV *Discrimination, Bullying, and Harassment Prevention Procedures* outline both procedures for informal resolutions and formal investigations. However, the FSA is not

mentioned in any of the procedural steps. It was not until I turned to article 10.7(d) of the Collective Agreement that I learned that "an employee named in a harassment case shall be entitled to an Association advocate, whose role will be to provide support for the member by listening to the member's concerns, providing information on rights, options, and procedures, and where appropriate, attending meetings or hearings in an informal capacity as a support person and recorder." According to 10.7(e), in the case of a formal investigation, the FSA and management must mutually agree to the investigator appointed. My conclusion at this point is that given the procedures in place, the FSA might not be made aware of complaints until they go to a formal investigation. Members are entitled to an FSA advocate at earlier stages, but that does not mean they will take advantage of that right. Furthermore, if they look only at policy 18, they might not even realize that it is their right.

To make an already long story short, I plan to spend some time trying to determine whether the FSA should be more proactive in keeping track of sexual harassment cases and in asking management to report the existence of complaints to them even when members do not ask for a union advocate.

Of course, tracking the number of complaints only gives us a small part of the picture because of the incidents that are brushed off, unrecognized, or unreported. We need to think carefully about what questions need to be asked to develop a more complete understanding of the workplace situation and what gender relevant issues actually exist. I could certainly use some help in developing those questions and in framing goals for my term as Status of Women Representative to the FSA. Please join me in forming an FSA Status of Women Committee. If you are interested, please email me at anastasia.anderson@ufv.ca

One of the things that I would like to do during my term is keep members informed of events and initiatives on campus that relate to the status of women. I hope the following will be of interest.

- The UFV Gender and Society Network was to host its first event on November 7. Dr. Fiona MacDonald was to share her paper entitled "Friends, Foes, or Fiction: Considerations on Feminist Men".
- The SUS's new Gender Equality Centre is now open and soon to have a new coordinator. I hope to have more information about the centre for the next issue.
- Please keep an eye out for announcements about this year's event commemorating International Women's Day and Action on Violence Against Women.



Unions and Our Community

Vicki Bolan | Staff
Vice President

As a long-time union member at UFV (and with another employer), I have been involved in the New West & District and Fraser Valley Labour Councils for longer than 18 years. Both of these organizations are members of the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress. While these organizations exist to improve the lives and working conditions of their union membership, it is their relationship with another organization that I am writing about today.

Many of you are familiar with the United Way and its annual workplace campaign but did you know that the United Way and the Canadian Labour Congress have been partners since 1988? For the past 29 years, these groups have been working together to strengthen communities across Canada. This partnership developed around a common interest: ensuring that workers and working families have the supports they need to succeed. In fact, in the United Way of the Lower Mainland, recently created by the merger of the UW of Vancouver and the UW of the Fraser Valley, servicing communities from Vancouver to Agassiz and beyond, fully one third of the fund-raising campaigns are in unionized workplaces.

This partnership between unions and the United Way goes deeper than financial support. Labour representatives advocate for those in need in their communities, serve on United Way boards, and volunteer in programs such as cooperative housing, childcare, and other services. Here in the Lower Mainland, the United Way is focussing on three program areas: All That Kids Can Be (laying the foundation for lifelong success); From Poverty to Possibility (providing hope and a sense of belonging to community); and Building Stronger Communities (making the Lower Mainland great for everyone with a focus on seniors). You only need to visit the United Way website to see that in 2016 alone they helped 200 agencies, 364 programs, invested \$33M, and changed 400,000 lives. (Visit https://uwlm.car-to.com/viz/a0d68e1c-708a-11e6-b1af-0e3ebc282e83/public_map?_ga=2.85233562.228698977.1508880499-1075966353.1508880499 for locations of programs.)



Unionism is not only about our workplace and our issues, unionism is about community and this means improving the lives and working conditions of all members of our communities. If you haven't done so already, I strongly urge you to support the United Way.



Musings on a Three-Legged Stool

Colleen Bell | Chief Negotiator

Before I arrived at UFV, I lived in Oregon for almost 12 years. Over that time, voters passed a number of anti-tax initiatives designed to limit the ability of cities and the state to increase taxes and introduce new sources of revenue.

Oregon's cities rely on property tax revenue to fund essential (e.g., fire, police, water, schools) and non-essential (e.g., public libraries, the arts) services. When these revenues aren't adequate to pay the bills, they turn to the state. The state relies on income tax revenues to fund things like social services, state emergency services, and higher education. But with some of these funds being diverted to municipalities for their essential services, the pressure on the state's general revenues increases, leaving huge gaps in the state's ability to fund the "nice-to-have" things like universities and libraries and arts activities.

Before these anti-tax measures, Oregon was already precariously balanced on a tax stool that was missing its third leg — a sales tax. Then voters started whittling away at the remaining two legs, which has led to disastrous social consequences. For example, in June of this year, the last remaining public library in Douglas County — just three hours south of Portland — closed its doors for lack of funding. Already one of the most impoverished counties in the state, its residents are now without the vital social resources

that a library provides, everything from a warm place to shelter to Internet access to information referral services to social connections and more.

I share these observations with you because I see analogies between this situation and our Faculty & Staff Association.

In recent years we've seen plenty of evidence that public sector bargaining is incredibly challenging. The mandate from the government—cost neutrality and no decrease in management rights—has left public sector unions with little means to effect improvements for public sector workers beyond meager salary increases (which must be paid for through concessions). Public support can be difficult to cultivate (they are, after all, paying most of the bills for the public sector), particularly when unionized workers appear to have it better than non-unionized workers. As we've seen, relying on bargaining as the only means for improving working conditions or worker rights is not likely to meet with success.

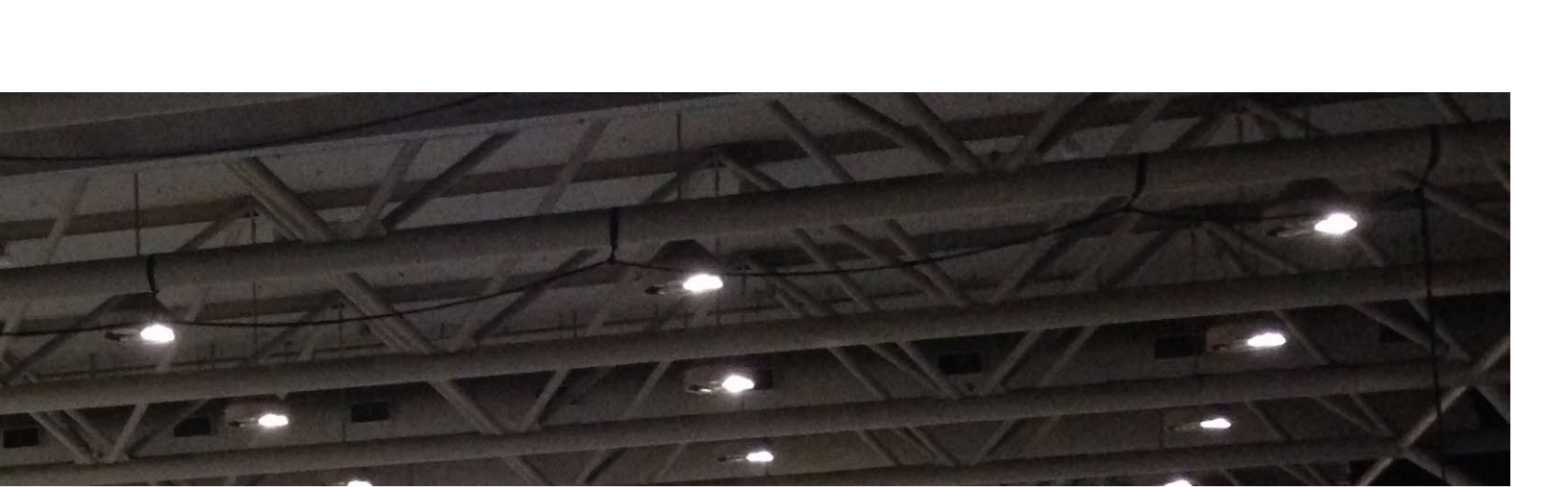
The emphasis on management rights has, I believe, led to an increasing need to focus our resources on contract administration at UFV. And we already focus significant resources on this activity—two full-time contract administrators and up to a dozen stewards who are spend their time dealing with member concerns, rights, and workplace issues. Every time I hear of a grievance around a termination—the

most serious disciplinary action that the Employer has available to them—I wonder if it's a perception or reality that the Employer is defaulting to termination—or the threat of imminent termination—as a disciplinary tool, rather than following the process of progressive discipline that is laid out in our Collective Agreement. This is surely something about which we should be concerned.

And this has led me to ask the question, "What am I missing here? Or, rather, what are we missing as a union?"

Earlier this year, I had the good fortune to attend the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) tri-annual Constitutional Convention in Toronto, followed immediately by the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE) Annual General Meeting in Victoria. And it was while attending these two events that I realized that we have been balancing precariously on a three-legged stool with one leg missing.

What I recognized is that there are three core activities of a union: bargaining, contract administration, and member engagement. Bargaining is how we negotiate our rights and working conditions. Contract administration is how we ensure the Employer is respecting those rights and working conditions. And member engagement is how we ensure that our members know the rights and working conditions to which they are entitled, as well as how to assert those rights ef-



fectively. And to effectively address the first two, we *must* focus on the third.

Imagine attending a union meeting where the room is full, where debate is plentiful and respectful, and where you start with a rousing rendition of *Solidarity Forever*, raising your fist in the air to emphasize the words on the final chorus because they hold meaning. Or participating in a march through the city streets, moving to the beat of drums and chanting along with the crowd (or even leading a chant). Or walking some other union's picket line to show your support for the workers, because that could be you under other circumstances.

These activities happen when union members are engaged, when they understand that the purpose of a union is to advance the rights of all workers, to fight for social justice at home and internationally, in your own sector and others, and to not be satisfied until all workers—not just unionized workers—have these rights. It is, after all, how we achieved many of the things we now have the ability to take for granted: child labour laws, the weekend, parental leave, extended leave, vacation leave, health and safety regulations, and pensions. But we shouldn't take them for granted, because they can disappear much more quickly and easily than they were achieved.

Member engagement is quite likely the most powerful tool that unions have at

their disposal. An engaged membership means that each member is aware of his or her rights and working conditions. Engaged members practice workplace advocacy—for themselves, and for their co-workers. They intervene when they see or experience things that contradict the Collective Agreement. They've read the Collective Agreement—or at least the parts that apply to them—and they inform others of their rights under the Collective Agreement. They don't need the services of a contract administrator as often, because workplace issues are addressed when they first appear, rather than when they become intolerable.

Engaged members show up when there are important issues to be discussed or just to lend support to fellow workers, and they speak up when they disagree, but also when they agree. They use the language of respectful debate: “I rise in support of/opposition to this motion because...” and “point of order/information/privilege.” And they use the word “solidarity” with full knowledge of its power, but also its privilege. And as a result, engaged members are in a stronger position at bargaining time, because they know that they have tools available to them.

Member engagement is the result of organizing, and organizing is the process of “connecting with people, building relationships, getting them involved and then getting them active in making change”

(CLC, “Mobilize to organize”). Organizing is about getting people to show up when it really matters, which means you also have to get them to show up when it doesn't, because it matters to someone else.

I believe that member engagement is our weakest link (our missing link?), and that we need to devote many more resources toward it. I believe it will only strengthen our union, and a strong union is the only way we're going to be able to achieve the gains in equity, compensation, and benefits that our members are asking for.

Our union executive is currently engaged in a reflective process examining our structure, our operations, and our relationships. At some point in the next few months, we're going to be issuing an invitation to you, our members, to tell us what you think of the recommendations we've come up with on the road to becoming a stronger union.

I'm challenging you to take just one step — showing up — so that our union can take some important and positive steps toward a more productive, more engaged future.

I'll be there—will you?



**Sven van
de Wetering** | Agreements
Chair

Interdisciplinarity, Morale, and Something Else We Whisper About in the Corridors: an Exquisite Corpse

The surrealists invented a game called “*cadavre exquis*” (exquisite corpse) in which each player writes a different part of a sentence without knowing what the other players have written. The phrase “*cadavre exquis*” came up the first time the game was played, hence the name. Variants of the game can be played with drawings or with whole stories. The idea is that bringing together disparate elements in an unplanned and unpredictable manner can create unexpected but emotionally powerful images that act as spurs to further creativity. I am not quite doing this game here, but I did want to try bringing together seemingly unconnected issues to see if looking for connections between them would foster some sort of insight.

My plan is to begin this column by writing about an issue that has been the subject of a lot of furtive whispering — namely sabbaticals. I will then juxtapose it with an issue where, if my reading of the tea leaves is accurate, labour and management are more or less on the same page, namely interdisciplinarity. I then hope to conclude using the sabbatical issue to cast some light on why interdisciplinarity is not really taking off, despite the fact that, as I said, people seem to agree that it would be a desirable development.

Sabbaticals

Let me begin with a brief quotation from the Collective Agreement: “All Type B Faculty, upon meeting the criteria of the respective leave committees, are entitled to a Sabbatical Leave.” I know I am not yet an old hand at the job of agreements chair, but using the shreds of mental keenness I have retained from my youth, I think this means that all Type B faculty are entitled to a sabbatical leave. To phrase it differently, this is not something management can withhold from Type B faculty, provided some minimal conditions are met.

Despite this fact, I am personally acquainted with two faculty members who have had their sabbatical proposals rejected in the

past couple of years. Furthermore, I know several more faculty members who have decided not to apply for a sabbatical leave because they consider the process too onerous and the outcome too uncertain. I confess that I, too, am somewhat intimidated. I recently applied for a sabbatical leave, and I made sure to include a detailed description of a fairly ambitious piece of scholarly work that I intend to do. This is not a problem, because I really do want to get this piece of work done, and I really do think the sabbatical leave is an ideal time to do it, and I was only mildly dismayed when I was asked to ramp up the ambitiousness of the project even more. Nevertheless, a part of me wishes I had had the courage to write something like, “I intend to spend the year sitting around the house in my bathrobe, eating Nutella™ straight out of the jar and watching MASH reruns. If I remember, I will also read an article in my area of specialty once a week, and I might get around to writing a review article toward the end of the leave.”

I’m not being entirely facetious here. If the sabbatical leave is an entitlement, then Type B faculty are entitled to it regardless of whether or not they appease some group of decision-makers with a really excellent proposal. More importantly, if our common goal is to offer TBUEIC (“the best undergraduate education in Canada”), then the depressing effect of sabbatical uncertainty on faculty morale is probably having more significant negative consequences than would result from letting the occasional faculty member get away with a less than stellar sabbatical project.

Somebody, or rather several somebodies, seems to have forgotten a piece of lore that both the name “sabbatical” and the fact that one is traditionally eligible for a sabbatical every seven years are designed to remind us of, namely that this is a break from routine work in the same way that the Sabbath is a break from routine work in a number of religions. People are enjoined to refrain from work on the Sabbath not just because God

(or in our case the CA) decrees it but also because people get stale if they work all the time. The sabbatical, like the Sabbath, was traditionally intended as an opportunity to recharge one’s mental batteries. I actually agree that a switch to a year devoted primarily to scholarly activity is probably better than a year of complete rest, and I suspect that a substantial proportion of faculty agree with me on this. For that very reason, intrusive and rigid enforcement of scholarly activity norms is redundant, and hence likely to have a negative effect on morale without substantially affecting either the quality or the quantity of scholarly activity that gets done during sabbatical leaves.

Why do we have this heavy-handed enforcement of scholarly activity norms for sabbatical leaves? There has been little public justification of this practice, so I know almost nothing for certain. This forces me to either speculate or say nothing. Being an academic, I choose to speculate, of course.

One of the better-established findings of organizational psychology is that bosses who put a lot of time and energy into telling their subordinates what to do tend to severely underestimate both the quantity and quality of work the subordinates would do without such instruction. This is due both to selection bias (i.e. bosses who think their workers are lazy, shiftless half-wits are more likely to behave this way in the first place) and to the tendency for the very act of bossing people around to lead, via a variety of psychological processes such as the actor-observer effect and cognitive dissonance, to the perception that one’s orders are having a greater effect on subordinates than they really are. I can imagine something like this is happening here: once the practice of monitoring sabbatical projects both before and after the fact became well established, the perception that many faculty were just waiting to spend a year doing nothing but eating Nutella™ took hold, and the practice of refusing sabbaticals that failed to live up to rigorous but poorly articulated standards

came about. I do not consider this a blame-worthy development; human nature tends to push people in this direction unless they guard against this specific tendency.

Needless to say, the effects on morale are profound. People who are genuinely burned out are more likely to write inadequate proposals because their energy reserves are at rock bottom. When their proposals are refused, they cannot go on sabbatical and are forced to keep up the same grind, thus becoming even more burned out. Others watch this from the sidelines, and some of the watchers fail to put in proposals at all, especially if they, too, are already fairly demoralized. Finally, a large number of faculty do put a lot of energy into writing good proposals, do get accepted, and do enjoy the benefits of a sabbatical leave. They are the success stories of this whole process. And yet, the spectacle of those who failed to get sabbaticals still contributes to their sense that they are teaching in a more hostile environment than they were ten or fifteen years ago. All in all, a sorry state of affairs.

Interdisciplinarity

Almost two years ago, department heads in the College of Arts had a retreat at which the major topic was interdisciplinarity. It was a cheerful occasion. The administrators who were there organized this event because they thought a greater degree of interdisciplinary collaboration was a good idea. Judging from the conversations that took place at that retreat, a large majority of the department heads present agreed. I don't want to assert that arts heads are a representative sample of UFV faculty members as a whole, but I don't think they are grossly unrepresentative, either, so I will stick my neck out and say that most UFV faculty members would probably be happy to see more collaboration across disciplinary boundaries.

Around that same time UFV was approached by the chief electoral officer (CEO) of BC and asked to do some work on political apathy in young adults. The UFV response to this was that an administrator, whom I thank for his efforts but will not name here, organized an interdisciplinary course on youth and electoral politics (IDS 400c). Despite a few missteps, both the 13 students and the six instructors agreed that this course went well. Success! And yet the paucity of similar initiatives is cause for concern.

There are two basic ways to organize interdisciplinary courses. One is top-down: someone in authority has an idea, finds faculty members willing to buy into that idea, and organizes a course. This is what happened with

IDS 400c, and as I said, it was a success. That success does not, however, mean that top-down methods are the only way to achieve interdisciplinarity. Bottom-up methods also have great potential. Two, three, or four faculty members from different disciplines are sitting around a table, perhaps with pints of beer in their hands, and discover that they have an area of interest in common, but that they approach it in different ways because of their backgrounds. They find their conversation mutually enriching, and decide it would be worthwhile to offer an interdisciplinary course together. They spend some time organizing, and eventually offer the course. This is a different path to success.

Most of the conversations on interdisciplinarity that I have been privy to (I am speaking here of conversations in normal voices in meeting rooms, not whispers in corridors) tend to overemphasize the role of top-down processes. I can see a number of reasons this happens. First, many of these conversations are initiated by administrators. Because they want to contribute to interdisciplinary teaching but are no longer classroom teachers themselves, they are constrained by their roles to focus on top-down initiatives. The second reason is one I alluded to in the section on sabbaticals: People who spend a good deal of their working life attempting to organize the activities of faculty members will tend to underestimate the degree to which faculty members can organize themselves. The third reason is the success of IDS 400c; because it is difficult to organize new initiatives from scratch, new initiatives tend to emulate old initiatives, especially successful ones. Since that one was top-down, the tendency is to visualize future initiatives as being the same way.

What would a more bottom-up approach to fostering interdisciplinary courses look like? The starting points of such initiatives are upbeat, high-energy conversations between faculty members of different disciplines. Fostering such contacts seems an obvious starting point. I started having way more conversations like this after I became a department head. For obvious reasons, this approach is not for everyone, at least not all at the same time. Committee meetings are another possible source of social contact across disciplines, but many of these are so spiritually deadening that they may not be that useful. My personal preference would be a faculty club, which would foster not only interdisciplinary discussion but also the consumption of beer, which I consider a useful lubricant for these sorts of exchanges. Having said this, I have to acknowledge

that there may not be enough reasonably engaged faculty at UFV to make a faculty club a financially viable proposition. Perhaps a faculty and staff club?

The other component of fostering bottom-up team teaching initiatives is finding a way to remove obstacles. I have quite a bit of experience in team teaching various courses, and one common thread I have discovered is that, if one adds up all the work done by all the instructors, it comes to more than the work one instructor would do to teach a course alone. Thus, one thing administrators can do if they want to foster interdisciplinary teaching is to develop a compensation model that does not disadvantage people who engage in team teaching. Those of us who do it do it because we love it, but that does not mean we are happy to work more for less pay than our colleagues. At some point the first flush of enthusiasm dissipates, and the temptation arises to pack it in and go back to teaching alone.

Conclusion

Though sabbaticals and interdisciplinarity are different issues, I have found one common thread: both issues become more difficult to manage when those who coordinate faculty efforts come to overestimate the positive impact they are having, and begin to believe that faculty are incapable of managing themselves. There is a flip side to this. There are also some indications in the organizational psychology literature that people whose work is managed in this way become more passive and childish, so that managers' low opinions of faculty risk becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. I think this is a dynamic people on both sides of the great divide want to steer clear of. It is one more component of poor morale. Though we may disagree on how good morale is at UFV, I think we can all agree that better morale is never a bad thing to have. To their credit, many administrators at UFV do fulfill their roles with a light touch, but it appears not to be enough; many administrative hurdles continue to get higher, and many people's pursuit of their academic goals are thwarted as a result. One of the casualties, in my opinion, is TBUEIC.



FSA Dollars at Work in the Community

**Michael
Maschek** | Secretary
Treasurer

In this submission to *Words & Vision* I would like to address the theme of unionism in the community from the standpoint of our FSA Donations policy. The policy is to reflect our shared belief in the value of community involvement. Our charitable donations budget for any fiscal year is to constitute 1.5 per cent of the previous year's dues. For this fiscal year, that amounts to \$12,831. According to the policy, our charitable interests are focused primarily on community charities operating within the Fraser Valley that have welfare, health, or education as a priority. This budget affords us a great deal of potential community outreach and support.

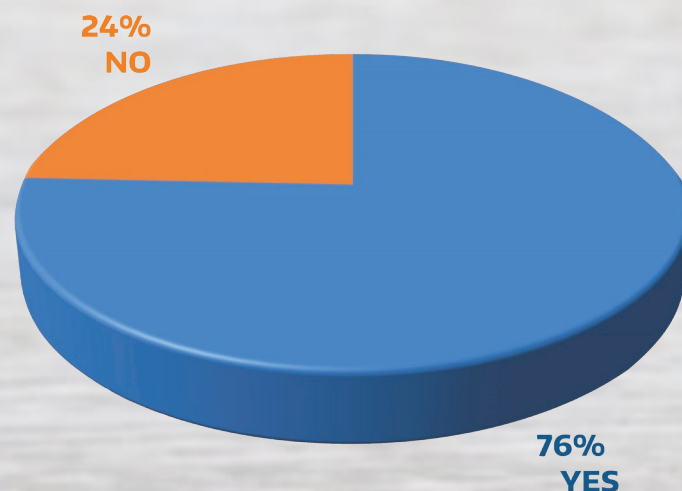
A number of questions relating to different aspects of the association were asked as part of our 2017 FSA Membership Survey. There were 280 respondents to the question relating to our donations policy, and 212 of them (75.71 per cent) indicated they were in favour of the practice. Several of the comments indicated respondents wanted more information on how these charities were decided upon.

Donations made on behalf of the FSA and its membership are considered and approved by the Finance and Administration committee. Prior to the end of this fiscal year, the Finance and Administration committee will make a series of decisions per-

taining to the remaining portion of the charitable donations budget. In order to help facilitate this process, donation requests and suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. The FSA office will provide a short form for submission by members interested in suggesting causes for the remaining charitable donations budget.

Given the mandate afforded by the policy, there remains a very rich set of options for directing this part of our budget. Local food banks have been a long-standing cause for the FSA and are recognized formally as an ongoing priority in our donations policy. Included is a five-year history of FSA donations (see Figure 2). In addition to facilitating feedback pertaining to potential future charitable donations, we would like to know whether FSA members feel the current policy and its application have served an effective application of unionism in the community. To this end, the Finance and Administration committee will be creating and distributing a survey of members pertaining to the effectiveness of the policy and the role it plays in community outreach. We would like to determine whether the policy has resulted in the form of outreach desired by the majority of members. The policy itself was last reviewed in 2012; significant trends in the feedback received

Figure 1. "Each year, the FSA donates 1.5% of the dues we collect to primarily registered charities in the Fraser Valley. Do you agree with this practice?"



could either be included in a revision to the policy or simply by tweaking our implementation of it. Should members have any suggestions prior to distribution of the survey, please feel free to contact me and I will share these directly with the Finance and Administration committee.

Please keep in mind our donation policy does place a priority on local community charities operating within the Fraser Valley and donation requests are considered against the priorities stipulated in the policy. Funding requests not considered include those associated with for-profit organizations, projects or events that have already occurred, political fundraisers, re-

ligious programs or organizations, groups or activities that are deemed discriminatory, or programs and services deemed outside our associations' focus areas.

As is the case for all our FSA policies, the FSA Donations policy is publicly available on the FSA website. If you have any questions relating to our donations policy and practices, or any other financial matter, please feel free to contact me: Michael.Maschek@ufv.ca

Figure 2. Five-year History of FSA Donations

FSA Donations in the past 5 years					
	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Organisation	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Abbotsford Community Services: Abbotsford Youth Health Centre	\$ 400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Abbotsford Community Services: Autumn House	\$ 400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Abbotsford Community Services - Developmental disabilities	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500
Abbotsford Community Services: Family Counselling Programs	\$ 400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Abbotsford Community Services: Food Bank	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 2,000
Abbotsford Community Services: General	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,500	\$ -
Abbotsford Community Services - seniors' programs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500
Abbotsford Community Services: Therapeutic Music Program	\$ 400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Abbotsford District Teachers' Association	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ -
Abbotsford Hospice Society	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ -
Abbotsford Restorative Justice & Advocacy Assoc.	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ 250
Agassiz-Harrison Community Services: Food Bank	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
BC Cancer Society	\$ -	\$ 350	\$ 400	\$ -	\$ 300
BC Childrens Hospital	\$ -	\$ 300	\$ 400	\$ 400	\$ -
BC SPCA	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 250
Big Brothers Big Sisters	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 300
Canuck Place Children's Hospice	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ -	\$ -
Children's Wish: Provincial Wish Trail Ride	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Chilliwack Community Services: Food Bank	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
Chilliwack Learning Community	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -
Chilliwack Teachers' Association	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 800	\$ -	\$ -
Don Murray Memorial Annual Scholarship	\$ -	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
Dr. Abebe Abay Teklu Scholarship	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
Dr. Jean Scott Endowment Scholarship	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
Education without Borders	\$ -	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fraser-Cascade Teachers' Association	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ -
Fraser Valley Conservancy	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fraser Valley Down Syndrome Society	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
Fraser Valley Humane Society	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -
Fraser Valley Regional Library	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 300
Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FVLC Labour Day Picnic	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Hope Community Services: Food Bank	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
Jim Andersen Annual Memorial Leadership Award	\$ -	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
Keith Newport Memorial Annual Bursary	\$ -	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
Mission Community Services: Food Bank	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,000
Mission District Teachers' Association	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 700	\$ -	\$ -
Right to Play International	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 300	\$ -
Special Olympics BC	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Surjit Atwal Remarkable Achievement Award	\$ -	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
The Warm Zone	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500
UFV Alumni Association Bursary Endowment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,017
UFV Angel Tree	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ -
UFV - Arts Majors Expo	\$ -	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ -	\$ -
UFV - CIVL Radio	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
UFV Student Union: Student Emergency Fund	\$ 1,278	\$ 391	\$ 258	\$ 1,308	\$ 366
United Way of the Fraser Valley	\$ -	\$ 400	\$ -	\$ 1,260	\$ 1,100
Warren Davis Memorial Annual Scholarship	\$ -	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ -
Total donations per fiscal year	\$ 11,728	\$ 12,041	\$ 12,508	\$ 12,468	\$ 12,383



**John
Carroll** | UFV
Retiree

Things Donald Trump Taught Me About the FSA

Almost a year and a half ago, my term as chief contract negotiator for the FSA came to an end. In fact, my term expired one day before the current contract was signed by the FSA and management negotiating teams. Any disappointment I felt at not being able to cap my years of work with the union by adding my signature was overshadowed by my relief that the laborious and frustrating negotiation process had finally reached its conclusion. Since then, I have reflected often on what that process had been like, what I might have done differently, and what the negotiating team could have done differently.

My stint as a member of the FSA contract negotiating team, and finally as chief negotiator, was a painful learning experience. It taught me hard lessons about my limits as consensus builder and the limits of the current adversarial approach to contract bargaining. What I am about to say will not be popular with some. Be assured that I am speaking about general principles. I do not wish to bring in issues of personality conflict and personal leadership styles. Whenever humans come together and try to agree on matters affecting their livelihood, there are bound to be disagreements since feelings run high and personal philosophies justify actions, which may be perceived by others as ruthless and even wrong. I will address only general principles regarding union and management relationship.

Since the last contract round, there has been an election in the United States and we have all watched with amazement as that country seems bent on imploding. Although

the stakes are much higher in that political game, I see similarities between what has been happening there and what happened during my experience at the bargaining table and continues to happen now. Here are three things I've learned from watching the conflicts evolve south of the border.

Don't blame all your present problems on your predecessors.

This is the old political game that we should all be tired of by now. The negotiating team that preceded the last one was headed up by Jonathan Hughes. Many will remember the outcry when the contract was presented to members. It was absolutely the members right to be critical of that contract. It was misguided for members to believe that somehow the negotiating team had cozied up to management and struck a deal that benefited members of the negotiating team, or that the negotiating team was hornswoggled by the deft and cynical moves of management. Not so. I sat through most of the bargaining sessions. And what I saw was intense, honest discussions that were always on both sides directed towards the goal of what would be best for UFV. Obviously, there will be disagreements because of the distinct perspectives and mandates of the two sides. However, there was every effort to come to an agreement that could work for both. So, the result was not accepted (in part because, in true union spirit, staff were willing to make sacrifices for the benefit of all). Fair enough. The members voted it down. That was the way the process should be. However, to blame the volunteers who spent hours negotiating and then hours fending off vi-



cious attacks by their own members is currently the Trump method, the Steve Bannon method. I don't like it because it's not humane and aren't universities supposed to be places where we learn how to exercise our common humanity? I also don't like it because it is in the end ineffective. It does nothing to further the interests of the members because they end up being caught in the crossfire of what becomes an escalating battle — member against member, union against management.

Don't try to marginalize those who don't think exactly the way you do.

I am speaking now strictly of relationships within the union executive. There is great strength in diversity of opinion. Isn't that what we also attempt to teach at the university — the appreciation of diversity? Active, vigorous debate works well in a democratic system of representation. Ideologues are dangerous to that system and can destroy from the inside out. In-fighting leads to demoralization. Members resign from roles on the executive, members are reluctant to stand for election to the executive since they perceive there is little tolerance for any divergence of opinion. And in the end, who suffers the most? The members. Without strong union voice at the table, be it during contract negotiations or during the day-to-day push and shove that is a natural part of union and management relationships, the union becomes intractable, or at best, it is perceived as intractable, and dialogue between the two sides breaks down, becomes counter-productive, combative and slow to respond to the needs of the members.

Don't set up a rigid dichotomy of us versus them.

By that, I mean don't assume the Other is ill-willed. Isn't one of the university's mandates to break that false division? To assume that all those people on the "other side" are evil, self-interested enemies of members is a narrow, prejudicial attitude unworthy of all of us. This is the model of the old two-party system in the States. If we treat those who sit across the table from us as enemies, they will feel the pressure to act as enemies. This is detrimental to members as well.

I believe in the FSA. It has done fine work for its members through the years. Yes, we are in a transition period where the "old UFV" is being replaced by the new, much more indifferent and impersonal "new UFV" model. The FSA needs to fight hard for best working conditions of its members. I believe it is trying to do that. I also believe that the present relationship between union and management is more strained than it has ever been. I wonder what benefit that is to anyone. Of course, the give and take has to come from both sides for anything positive to happen. But I also believe there are good people on both sides who want to see that happen.

The state of our union is in peril. Members might not be aware of this, but they will need to wake up and be more involved in their union, more aware of the issues at stake, and more in communication with their union executive. We cannot have only a fragmented executive making the decisions that govern all our working lives. Do we want ideological identification or open debate?



Municipal Pension Plan FAQs

Debbie Dyck | UFV
Pension & Benefits Officer

Staff at UFV are offered enrolment in the Municipal Pension Plan based on the plan rules for eligibility. I represent FSA members on the Council of Joint Organizations and Unions, which is part of the Municipal Employees' Pension Advisory Committee. These committees meet approximately twice a year to discuss changes and/or events that effect the MPP. UFV employees enrolled in the MPP are encouraged to access their personal pension information online and find information on the plan. To access the MPP staff can go to www.pensionsbc.ca

BC's Municipal Pension Plan members are vital to British Columbia and care deeply about the work they perform for our communities. Members include firefighters, police, nurses and other healthcare workers, city workers, non-teaching staff at schools and colleges, community social service providers and more. British Columbians count on our members every day, and our members count on the Municipal Pension Plan to help them save for their retirement years.

BC's Municipal Pension Plan is a defined benefit pension plan. Each time you are paid, both you and your employer contribute to the plan. These contributions are pooled and invested so that you receive a lifetime, monthly pension when you retire. In fact, about 75 per cent of the average pension payment is currently paid by the plan's investment returns.

Your lifetime monthly pension will be based on a specific formula. This formula includes:

- The number of years of pensionable service
- The average of your highest five years of salary

When you retire, you will receive a monthly pension for your lifetime.

After you die, depending on the pension option you chose at retirement, the plan may continue to pay:

- A pension to your spouse (if you have one) for their lifetime
- Pension benefits to another beneficiary(ies)
- A lump-sum payment to your estate or an organization that you have named as your beneficiary

As a new member, once you have made your first contribution to the plan, you can receive a pension at your earliest retirement age. If you're an inactive member who joined the plan before September 30, 2015, other conditions apply.

If you have questions regarding the Municipal Pension Plan, feel free to contact me.

Local 4653 or email Debbie.Dyck@ufv.ca





Human Rights Committee Members Needed

**Kulwant
Gill** | FPSE Human Rights &
International Solidarity Rep

As your FPSE Human Rights & International Solidarity Committee (HRISC) representative and steward at large, I have several goals that I would like to accomplish in the 2017/18 year. First of all, I want to establish an active Human Rights committee, with the hope of having at least one faculty, staff, sessional and/or auxiliary on this committee. If you are interested on being a member of this committee (chaired by me), please get in touch with me. I promise we will only meet no more than three times a year. As a local committee, our mandate will be to plan human rights related events on campus, raise awareness on global justice and human rights issues, and be a resource for information sharing and knowledge. I have been allocated a small budget to host human rights-related events.

Second, I want members to feel they can come and share their concerns/issues with me in a professional and confidential manner. As a steward, it is my responsibility to represent the membership and ensure your voice is being heard. The FSA executive wants to hear your concerns

and issues and we will do everything in our power to ensure there are no violations in our Collective Agreement. Finally, I want to establish better connections with other human rights advocates at the local, provincial, national and international level. Human rights issues affect us all, regardless of where we live. If you become aware of an issue that you think will be of relevance to our members, keep me in the loop.

In May, I attended the annual FPSE AGM. The theme of the AGM was “Stronger Together: Building High-Participation Unions.” In keeping with this theme, let’s work together to make our workplaces safer, free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination. I welcome your ideas and suggestions to make UFV the best place to work.

I am looking forward to working with both the returning and new executive members. I also want to recognize the hard work that the FSA staff do on our behalf.





Vision vs. Policy: Perspective of a Steward

**Robert
McAuliffe** | FSA
Steward

Upon looking back, and after serving as a steward for this past year, it seems that I have only just begun to understand some of the issues that we continue to work on. Recently I was nominated, and I gladly accepted, the opportunity to support and cover other membership areas as your steward. I look forward to helping the membership in any way that I can.

Over recent months, I have reflected on a few occasions; do our policies support and enable our vision? Some of our visioning statements include phrases like; the best undergraduate education in Canada, and; evidence-based decision-making. Some of our policy documents including our Collective Agreement and many of our operational policies at times don't seem supportive. At times, some of our operational policies do not seem to have been written with our vision in mind. Policy 18 — Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Prevention — is an example. This policy seems to be much more punitive, restrictive and limiting than our vision might have intended. Further, this policy doesn't seem to place much emphasis on the identification, development and improvement of aspects of the health of our working environment.

I have been working towards finding ways that our vision might better align with how we put it into practice by the application of policy. So far, without much success. In the remainder of this report, I will describe some of the areas of disconnect I have encountered. In my role as steward, I will continue to work towards better understandings, with hopes of providing suggested solutions at the higher levels of what guides us. A few key aspects are discussed in the following sections.

Academic unit

I have observed that there does not seem to be any clear definition of academic unit. The term can, and often seems to be, applied quite loosely to describe groupings with our academic decision-making environment and model. One academic unit is the membership of a Faculty Council, where this unit is quite clearly an academic unit, that functions as an academic decision-making body with responsibility to Senate, and where its decisions are clearly academic, not operational.

Another academic unit, that is sometimes less clear, is the faculty membership within a department that make up the team that are responsible for successful delivery of a program or group of programs, and where support staff are not considered a part of this academic unit. It is more often the case that a department is a term used to describe an operational unit that may include teaching faculty, non-teaching faculty and/or support staff.

It has always been my understanding that an academic unit — at the program level — is a group of faculty responsible for the successful delivery of a program or group of programs. And typically, an academic unit comprises the academic faculty within a department.

Historically, it seems that there hasn't been much need for these distinctions. More recently, the need for a clearer definition of academic unit has been surfacing. Not at the Faculty Council level, as those groups are not called upon for any decision-making that is operational. At the program and department level, difficulty can sometimes arise when the department unit and the academic

unit start to become substantially different. On one end of the spectrum, there may be a very large academic unit, that is simply too large to function as an operational unit. An example might be ABE or ESL. At the other end of the spectrum there might be two or more small groups of faculty in the same department that share operational resources, but that have responsibility for the delivery of different programs.

An important fairness issue can arise when access to academic work by faculty becomes unbalanced. The question arises, is the sharing and allocation of academic work based on operational decision-making or on academic decision-making? For staff, their work is assigned based on an operational model. i.e. a wide range of work is available and shared. For faculty, this can become more difficult if the available pool of work reduces. Some examples might include a circumstance where there is more than one program in a department and where one program is cancelled. Another example might be the partial elimination of a program. Yes, it is correct that all our ongoing work is dependant on our programs not being partially eliminated. To take this to the extreme, and for illustration

Is the sharing and allocation of academic work based on operational decision-making or on academic decision-making?

purposes, a program could have 10 faculty and 10 program partials, and it could then be argued that each faculty has their own distinct partial program. The result is a highly competitive arrangement — perhaps to the point of dysfunction. Any notion of team is lost.

A clearer definition of academic unit at the department and program levels, for aspects of program and course planning and work allocation, will be a welcomed improvement.

Academic freedom

We have a board policy on academic freedom where Senate has a role in managing the handling of cases of the possible disrespect of academic freedoms. As well, there is language in the Collective Agreement that outlines some of these freedoms. To my knowledge there has not yet been a case of academic freedom that has made its way through our Senate. For aspects of teaching and research there isn't too much disagreement about the application of our academic freedoms. However, there is significantly more disagreement arising in areas of program and course development, program and course planning, the determination of classroom and lab resources for successful program delivery. There are others. A specific example is where there seems to be increasing disagreement on issues such as the choice of the delivery mode of a section of a course. I have heard some say the delivery mode is to be determined by faculty, while others believe that the delivery mode is completely prescribed as a decision by the operational unit. I can appreciate both views, however, I wonder why an operational unit would make decisions on this issue that supersede the recommendation of those faculty that teach the course.

I continue to gather and provide information on academic freedom, and I will continue to defend aspects of freedom for academic

faculty, in teaching and research, and perhaps more importantly in those other areas described — and yes that can be somewhat more controversial.

Partial discontinuation of a program

Somehow this has found its way into our current Collective Agreement language as a reason for faculty lay-off. This is so counter-intuitive to the mission of any respected university that I am all but certain that our administration will want it removed. It is very counter to the idea of a department also functioning as an academic unit. Further, and over time, I believe it will set up adversarial relationships within departments. As mentioned above this is also related to the definition of academic unit.

Workload Assignment (Faculty)

I have had the opportunity to answer many different question related to our Article 18 — Working Conditions for Teaching Faculty. Indeed, some interesting situations have arisen, and continue to arise.

Some of the provisions in this article assume in a timely fashion, yet I have observed instances, in some areas, where processes are far from timely.

Article 10.7 — Harassment vs. Policy 18 — Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Prevention

I have done some work on the review of the relatively new Policy 18 and how it relates to our Article 10. It appears there may be an interesting legal question. Although Policy 18 was not bargained, it is linked to our Collective Agreement. Given the circumstances, it is advisable to contact the FSA if you have any situation arising where Policy 18 is being referenced. Specifically, the phrase from the policy: "Any complaint that is found to be malicious, vexatious or submitted in bad faith may be considered harassment un-

der this policy," is something to watch closely. Difficulty can arise when protection from allegations of vexatious conduct are handled by the same policy where the alleged vexatious conduct was identified.

Closing

We live in interesting times. I am confident that your FSA, both executive and stewards, continue to work tirelessly in the background to ensure your working conditions are as good as they can be. As steward, particularly as a relatively new steward, I am often surprised by the significant level of work that goes on behind the scenes and that can so easily go unnoticed.

I thank those members that have supported me in helping you. If anything in this report sparks a thought, a question or a comment, feel free to send me a note or a comment at any time. I would very much appreciate hearing from you.

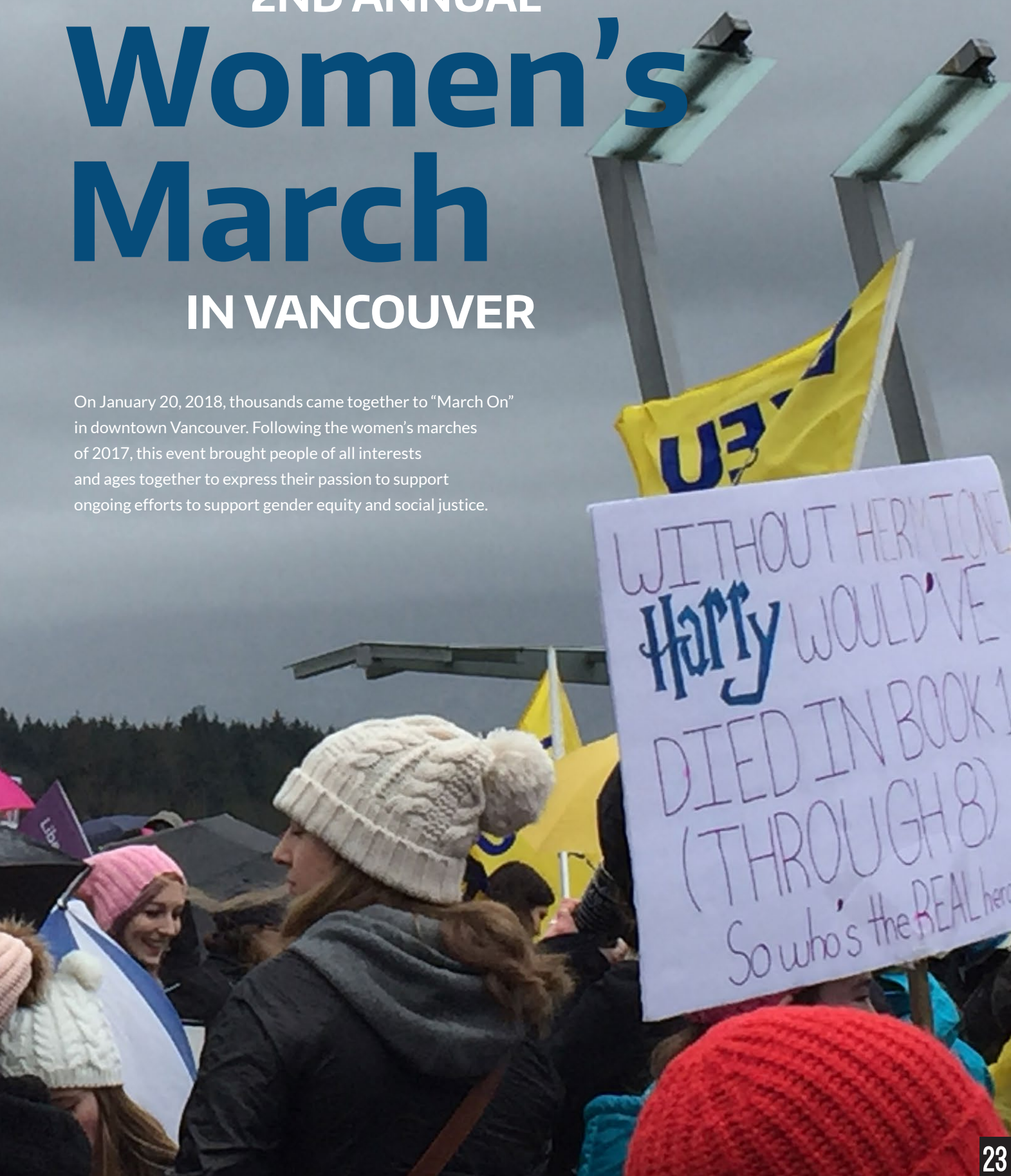


Photos by Faculty VP, Christina Neigel



2ND ANNUAL Women's March IN VANCOUVER

On January 20, 2018, thousands came together to "March On" in downtown Vancouver. Following the women's marches of 2017, this event brought people of all interests and ages together to express their passion to support ongoing efforts to support gender equity and social justice.



Did you know?

1 You're getting a raise!

Because BC's economy grew by 3.5 per cent in 2016, you will receive a 1.4 per cent increase in February 2018, and another 0.5 per cent in April 2018. The Statistics Canada-confirmed economic growth exceeds last February's forecast of 2.7 per cent. The Economic Stability Dividend, negotiated in the last round of bargaining, provides for a dividend of 50 per cent of the positive difference between economic growth and its forecast. The Economic Stability Dividend of 0.4 per cent will begin in Feb. 2018, in addition to the one per cent increase we were already expecting.

2 Membership Database

Coming soon, we're going to be asking you more about yourself: what you do here at UFV, what department you work in, which campus you work on, how long you've been here, and home contact information. We're building a database of our members to serve you better and in case we need to reach you outside of the UFV email system.

Stay tuned for more information.

WORDS & VISION

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